



**ENCOURAGING DEMOCRATIC VALUES
AND ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP AMONG YOUTH**

2013/14

**Elma Mahmutović-Hodžić, National Director
Aida Salčić, Project Coordinator**

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>> ACTIVITIES >>

1. Educational and Skills Development Program

The educational and skill development component of the project was held in Sarajevo between November 30 and December 7, 2013. The aim of this project phase was to introduce participants to fundamental democratic principles, values and cultural characteristics, and to develop skills needed for the active participation in society. This aim was accomplished by developing a program in which each day was devoted to a specific topic:



1. Democracy

The first day of the program allowed participants to increase their awareness and basic knowledge related to the basic democratic concepts. Participants learned about the history of the development of democratic ideas, formal and legal foundations of democracy, democratic models, main components of effective democracy, democratic values, democratic political culture and political education.

2. Human rights

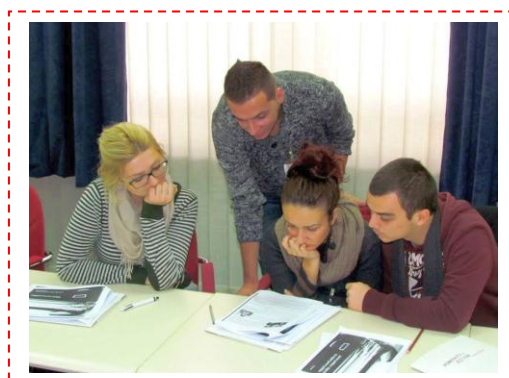
The second day was focused on human rights including the main human rights categories, basic documents on human rights, core principles of human rights and the instruments needed to exercise them. Special attention was devoted to the assessment and discussion about the state of human rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as dialogue and tolerance as behavioral characteristics that seem to be missing in BiH society. The day included a human rights simulation game on the European Court of Human Rights that put functioning of the Court, as well as the cases brought before it, into perspective for the participants.

3. Identity and nationalism

The third day dealt with basic concepts of identity and the influence of social factors, positive and negative aspects of collective identity, prejudice and discrimination based on identity. In the focus of discussions were questions of collective identity in BiH and nationalism. Critical reading and thinking were singled out as one of possible tools for overcoming nationalism.

4. Youth engagement and active citizenship

The fourth day focused on youth engagement and offered the participants insight into how active citizenship and volunteering can influence both individuals and communities. The speakers emphasized possibilities offered through civil society



organizations, described ways of youth participation in decision-making processes in BiH, and presented an alternative to the current discourse in the form of civil disobedience and community organizing.

5. Communication skills

The first day of skills development workshops focused on various aspects of the communication process. The participants learned about active listening, assertive and non-verbal communication, public appearance, presentation skills etc., and also received individual feedback on their communication abilities. Part of the day was devoted to the topic of using social media as a tool for promotion of ideas and initiation of actions.

6. Leadership skills

The second skill building oriented day was devoted to the introduction of the concept of leadership, characteristics of leaders, leadership styles, defining participant's styles with personal feedback and review of leadership concept in BiH society. Special attention was given to developing effective presentation skills, as well as specific leadership skills related to time management and managing teams.



7. Research skills

The aim of the last program day was to prepare participants for the next phase of the project. They learned how the research process should be framed, how to develop a research synopsis, research methodology, data sources and what research techniques to use. The organizers allocated research mentors and asked the participants to present their research ideas. The mentors then offered individual feedback on the proposed topics.

Formats used throughout the program were: interactive lectures, simulation games, group work, debates, workshops, movie screenings and discussion, panels and individual work. The goal of the organizers was to introduce participants to different types of teaching and learning methods which stimulate active participation, being aware that these methods are rarely applied in formal educational settings in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Humanity in Action BiH invited a total number of 16 lecturers/trainers and 5 panel participants.

2. Individual Research

The second phase of the program started on December 15, 2013 and lasted until March 15, 2014. During this phase, participants conducted individual research and wrote academic-style papers on the issues directly related to the existing obstacles that hinder the effective participation of youth in their local communities and other problems and deficiencies in these communities that they would like to see resolved.

The topics pertain to a wide spectrum of their interests and the participants have been assigned mentors based on the topics selected. Each mentor supervised a group of five participants. The mentors communicated with the mentees on a regular basis and provided hands-on support during the research process.

The participants wrote about the following topics:¹

Knowledge about the Cultural and Social Life of Young People in the Other Entity, Đorđe Ostić

The Efforts of Local Authorities to Suppress Xenophobia and Chauvinism in Livno, Sanel Tufekčić

Perception of and the Trust of the Citizens of Prijedor in the Police, Miloš Macura

Living Standards of Students at the University of Bihać – Case Study: Law Faculty of the University of Bihać, Arnela Zečević

A Comparative Overview of the Perception of Optimism/Pessimism of Young People in Large and Small Towns, Mahir Sijamija

Attitudes of Citizens of Bihać on Youth Activism in Local Community, Eldin Begić

The Role and Significance of Student Organizations at the University of Tuzla, Arnes Žabić

Attitudes of Students of State Universities towards the Students of Private Universities in Sarajevo, Berina Verlašević

How Students Perceive the Presence of Stray Dogs in Sarajevo, Nina Došenović

The Habits of Young People towards Reading Books at the University of Sarajevo, Lana Bečiragić

Types and Level of City and National Identity of Students of the Faculty of Economics in Zenica, Aldin Vrškić

Attitudes of Young People on the Culture of Volunteering in Bihać, Ammar Liđan

Youth Activism in Mostar, Matea Jevrić

The Factors behind the Non-Existence of the Law on Youth in the Brčko District, Jasmina Karahasanović

¹ The participants' research papers are available in local languages on [this link](#).

3. Project and Financial Management Training

The main aim of the third phase of the program was to provide participants with skills and basic knowledge in project and financial management in order for them to be able to plan, implement and report about their group projects properly. The second aim was to facilitate a process of planning group projects that will be implemented solely by program participants from the end of March until the end of June 2014.

The four-day intensive training was organized in Mostar.

On the first day of the program participants presented their research findings and conclusions. Each participant had 5 minutes for the presentation, after which the group was given an opportunity to ask questions. Participants showed great interest in the research topics of their colleagues. They offered constructive criticism, suggestions for advancing conclusions, and they discussed how problems targeted by researches reflect on their everyday life.

The second day of the program was fully dedicated to the development of project and financial management skills. Participants were taught what projects are, about the project cycle, how to translate an idea into a project, how to write project proposals, how to create a budget, how to monitor and evaluate projects and how to do narrative and financial reports. Special attention was given to the proposal writing part where participants learned how to determine the purpose and specific goals



of the project, target group, activities and timeline for their implementation, expected results, and possible risks that could occur in the project implementation. Each of these learning segments was followed by practical work and assignments for participants. At the end of this day participants were divided into three groups which will act as project teams in the following period. Each group received guidelines on what is expected from them in the next phase of the program. They had a few hours to brainstorm and to do background research in order to justify the need for the project they proposed.

On the third day, divided in groups, program participants worked on writing their project proposals, planned their project implementation, divided the work among themselves and developed budget proposals. After completing the proposal outlines, the groups had to present them to HIA staff and a trainer. Their feedback served as a basis for improvement of the participants' ideas and as preparation for more effective implementation of project.

The last day of the program was concluded with group work on using social media for promoting projects. This training will be useful for obtaining more visibility of their projects during the next phase of the program, thus demonstrating the ability of young people, represented by program participants, to bring about change in their communities.

4. Civic Campaigns

In the fourth phase of the program, starting on March 24, 2014, the participants were given three months to finalize their group action projects. This phase allowed program participants to apply the newly acquired skills and network that was built up during the previous phases of the program. Humanity in Action staff provided ongoing support and mentorship.

>> Group 1: “A Campaign for a More Cultured Krajina” had the aim of raising awareness about the importance of culture, primarily among young people, but also among other citizens of Krajina (North-Western region of BiH).

The members of this group (Đorđe Ostić, Miloš Macura, Eldin Begić, Arneta Zečević, Ammar Liđan) divided the project into two phases:

The first phase of this project was to be implemented in the two BiH entities (Republika Srpska and the Federation of BiH) and had the aim of connecting people through culture – by promoting cultural institutions and cultural events in Banja Luka (Republika Srpska) and Bihać (Federation of BiH) through street art. The group members held a number of meetings with the representatives of the relevant cultural institutions and events that were to be promoted (e.g. the representatives of the National Theater of Republika Srpska and the Museum of Republika Srpska, both in Banja Luka). The representatives of these institutions welcomed the idea wholeheartedly. However, due to massive floods that swept Banja Luka in the same exact period of time when this part of the project was to be implemented, the promotional activities in Banja Luka did not take place. The promotional activities still took place in Bihać for the cultural institutions in this city (it is worth noting that Bihać was unaffected by the floods).

In the second phase of the project, the team launched a website dedicated to gathering all the cultural events and descriptions of what Bihać, Banja Luka, and other cities in the Krajina region, have to offer in terms of culture. The website is the first of its kind, since it encompasses cultural events and institutions in two BiH entities, as well as different cities in the Krajina region. The idea was to try to connect people through culture in the region, rather than create divisions based on ethnicity and entity affiliations. The website was also promoted through street art, posters and stickers around the cities involved.

>> Group 2: “I Want Things to be Different in BiH” was implemented in 3 BiH cities (Sarajevo, Zenica, Tuzla) and had the aim of raising awareness that being different is not a bad thing and to shed light on the student standard in the country by printing brochures with stories of individuals (students) who overcame obstacles despite being labeled as ‘different’ by the society they live in.

The group members (Lana Bečiragić, Aldin Vrškić, Berina Verlašević, Arnes Žabić, Jasmina Karahasanović) worked on the project in two phases:

In the first phase, the team used their networking skills to find 5 individuals – all BiH students – who would be willing to anonymously share their stories of fighting adversities and the stigma of being ‘different’ in BiH. They chose to publish 150 copies of brochures consisting of the stories of the following individuals: a mature student, a member of the LGBTQI community, a member of a minority ethnic group, a Roma person, and a student

who is also employed and support his family.

The second phase consisted of publishing a free-for-all open call for submitting photos on the topic of “Show me how you see things better in BiH and/or how you feel that we are all essentially the same”. The call attracted a number of young amateur photographers whose photos were printed out and presented to the public.

Both the brochure and the photo exhibition (of the photos submitted to the open call) were presented at events in the following BiH cities: Zenica (Museum of the City of Zenica), Tuzla (Sagittarius) and Sarajevo (Art Cinema Kriterion) and attracted a considerable number of visitors. At the Zenica event, a representative of the Open Society Foundation from Hungary offered a scholarship to the Roma student who published their story in the brochure – based solely on the inspirational story itself.



The project also drew significant press support and coverage, with more than 20 printed and online media sources publishing information on it, including some of the most widely-read news websites (e.g. Klix.ba published the news about the exhibitions in [Sarajevo](#) and [Zenica](#), [Source.ba](#) and the student website [Studomat.ba](#)). The project team also received requests to hold the exhibitions in other BiH cities, which will take place after the end of the EDVACAY program.

>> Group 3: “Say NO to Prejudice” had the aim of decreasing prejudice and stereotypes of young people based on (among others) name, nationality, language, and to connect young people from different environments by organizing two anti-prejudice workshops led by experts in the field. The project engaged youth from Sarajevo and Mostar.

The project team (Matea Jevrić, Mahir Sijamija, Nina Došenović, and Sanel Tufekčić) held the first anti-prejudice workshop at the Faculty of Political Science in Sarajevo, where they managed to engage 14 young people – students from different fields and from different areas from BiH and abroad. The second anti-prejudice workshop took place at the United World College premises in Mostar and engaged 15 young people studying in Mostar.



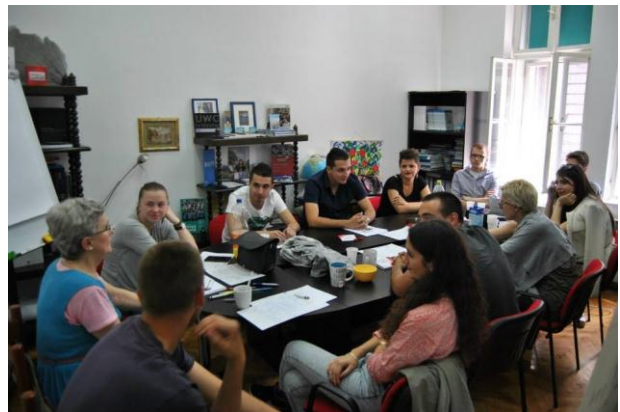
At both workshops, which were promoted through online media and through posters at faculties in Sarajevo and Mostar, the group members held a part of the workshops or were active facilitators, thus transforming themselves from EDVACAY project participants with little or no experience in non-formal education to peer educators who are actively conveying knowledge to others. The workshops were also partly held by a professor from the Faculty of Political Science in Sarajevo.

All the workshop participants were surveyed on their level of prejudice and stereotypes before and after the workshops and the feedback was positive: the participants said they managed to at least to a certain extent reduce their conscious or subconscious prejudice and were very satisfied with both the content and the organization of the workshops. These young people from Sarajevo and Mostar also expressed an interest in both the EDVACAY project and the work of Humanity in Action Bosnia and Herzegovina.

5. Final Event

The final program meeting was structured in two parts.

In the first part, program participants spent the first half of the day evaluating all phases of the program with special reflection on the project implementation phase, group dynamics and lessons learned. In addition, along with HIA BiH staff facilitation, the program participants developed their personal plans for the upcoming period of time. The important segment of it was discussing what role could HIA BiH and its network play in those plans. They also had a session



dedicated to the main principles of networking and were encouraged to use different resources to fulfill their plans. Finally, they were presented with different ways of extending their group action projects, focusing on attracting more people to their cause, as well as securing additional funding (especially for the continuation and expansion of their group action projects or even personal ones).

In the second part of the final program phase, coordinators of action projects spoke about their experience in the program and shared their thoughts with the participants, staff and guests present.

>> ASSESSMENT / EVALUATION >>

The “Encouraging Democratic Values and Active Citizenship among Youth” program was developed with the goal of inspiring and awakening the interest of first and second year students from Bosnia and Herzegovina in becoming active participants of civil society in the country. Through this initiative, Humanity in Action BiH aims at helping them play a more significant role in promoting democratic values, human rights and diversity among their peers.

In order to achieve the program goals, Humanity in Action BiH approached a number of renowned figures from Bosnian public life to speak with the participants, teach them and encourage them to utilize their newly gained knowledge upon return to their home communities.

While measuring the level to which we succeeded in getting the participants interested and

even passionate about the program, we have developed evaluation forms that the participants were asked to fill on the last day of the first project phase, the educational module. On the scale of 1 to 5, the average grade on the extent to which the program met their expectations was 4, 7 (5 representing the highest grade.)

By presenting initiatives, projects and campaigns implemented in BiH and worldwide, the speakers and Humanity in Action BiH inspired program participants to consider becoming involved in or developing new projects in their own communities. Aldin Vrškić, this year's participant from Zenica, joined the informal group (R)evolution+, a group responsible for organizing student protests in Zenica on December 21, 2013 advocating BiH being included in the EU-funded Erasmus+ program. Additionally, 9 of this year's and last year's participants in the EDVACAY program took part in the Crash Course against Hate Speech organized in December 2013 by the Youth Initiative for Human Rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina (YIHR BiH) after HIA BiH forwarded them the call for participation.

Besides the efforts to develop critical thinking among program participants through individual researches, HIA BiH paid great attention to the development of participants' academic writing skills. The participants were guided through the research and writing phases, given guidelines and recommendations, which will hopefully be of great use in their future academic projects, since not enough attention is being devoted to these skills at most of the universities in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Research findings motivated the participants to take immediate action through their group projects. All groups drew project idea inspirations from the individual pieces of research they conducted. For instance, Group 1 participants modeled their project after the research findings of Đorđe Ostić, the group leader, about the lack of knowledge of social and cultural life of young people in different entities in BiH. Group 2 participants, on the other hand, were motivated to write a project proposal on the life standard of students, inspired by research on student standard conducted by Arnela Zečević, one of the program participants. Finally, Group 3 participants decided to combine the findings of their research on youth activism (Matea Jevrić), the lack of optimism among young people (Mahir Sijamija) and the lack of sustained effort of the government to fight prejudice, chauvinism and xenophobia (Sanel Tufekčić).

Humanity in Action BiH has kept the participants involved in its current and future activities. The participants were invited to all social events with Humanity in Action Senior Fellows with the aim of facilitating discussions and cooperation among them. This year's participant Berina Verlašević took an active part in the Humanity in Action Peacebuilding Project with HIA Senior Fellows in Prijedor.

Humanity in Action BiH believes that this program has given solid grounds to the participants for their future civic engagement and the organization shall serve as a platform for constructive project ideas and activities.